

## Message Text

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65

ACTION DPW-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 SCS-03

SCA-01 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

H-02 /079 W

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O R 211255Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3648

INFO AMCONGEN HONG KONG

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

DIA WASHDC

JCRC BARBERS PT HAWAII

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 26332

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, VS

SUBJ: AMERICAN DEPARTS VIET-NAM

REF: A) BANGKOK 26162 (NOTAL) B) BANGKOK 22368 C) VIENTIANE 1737

SUMMARY: ARLO GAY DEPARTED SAIGON WITH HIS FAMILY SEPTEMBER 21. HE HAD BEEN RELEASED FROM PRISON THE PREVIOUS DAY. IMPRISONED IN THE NORTH FOR ALMOST A YEAR, HE MANAGED TO ESCAPE BRIEFLY IN JULY UNTIL HE SURRENDERED SEVERAL WEEKS LATER. END SUMMARY.

1. SPECIAL AIR FRANCE FLIGHT FROM SAIGON ARRIVED SEPTEMBER 21 WITH 128 PASSENGERS, AMONG WHOM WERE ARLO GAY, HIS WIFE AND CHILD. NEITHER TERESA REED NOR LEONARD JUDSON'S WIFE TCHONG  
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SAU KIM WERE ON BOARD. ALMOST ALL PASSENGERS WERE FRENCH OR

VIETNAMESE.

2. GAYS WERE ACCOMPANIED TO TAN SON NHUT BY BOTH A NORTH VIETNAMESE CAPTAIN AND AN OFFICIAL FROM FOREIGN MINISTRY'S SAIGON OFFICE, INDICATING SPECIAL DEGREE OF CONCERN ON PART OF VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES THAT THEY DEPART. GAY HAD BEEN IN PRISON VIRTUALLY ENTIRE TIME SINCE TAKEOVER, SPENDING MOST OF THAT IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT.

3. GAY'S STORY SINCE TAKEOVER IS FASCINATING. UNDER USG CONTRACT TO HELP EVACUATE PEOPLE, HE HAD PILOTED BARGE FROM PHU QUOC ISLAND TO RACH GIA AREA APRIL 30, 1975, IN ORDER TO ASK ABOUT SITUATION. AT SAME TIME ARVN HELICOPTER LANDED CARRYING A DISTRICT CHIEF FROM AN GIANG PROVINCE AND TWO OTHER ARVN OFFICERS. WHILE GAY WAS TALKING TO THEM, THEY WERE ALL TAKEN PRISONER. (THIS PROBABLY ACCOUNTS FOR MCDONALD'S HELICOPTER STORY REPORTED REF B). AFTER SPENDING A MONTH IN PRISON SOMEWHERE ON THE CA MAU PENINSULA, HE AND THE ARVN OFFICERS WERE MOVED TO CAN THO MILITARY PRISON MAY 27. PRISON CONTAINED SOME 600 ARVN OFFICERS UP THROUGH THE RANK OF COLONEL, THE GENERALS HAVING BEEN TAKEN AWAY. THEY ALL SPENT TIME WRITING THEIR LIFE HISTORIES (ABOUT WHICH HE WAS TOLD IN MARCH, 1976 THAT HIS WAS LAST AMONG AMERICAN TO BE "PROCESSED".)

4. ON OCTOBER 6, GUARDED BY SEVEN SOLDIERS, WAS PLACED IN SOVIET-MADE HELICOPTER AND FLOWN TO HANOI, ARRIVING FOLLOWING DAY AFTER OVERNIGHT STOP IN DANANG AREA. HE WAS THEN TAKEN ALMOST DIRECTLY TO PRISON CAMP THIRTY KILOMETERS FROM SON TAY. THERE WAS EVIDENCE THAT AMERICANS HAD BEEN HOUSED THERE PREVIOUSLY. FOOD WAS MUCH IMPROVED OVER THAT IN HIS PAST PRISON EXPERIENCES. HE WAS HOUSED IN SINGLE CONCRETE BUILDING SEPARATED FROM MAIN PART OF PRISON, WITH ARMED GUARDS ALWAYS STATIONED OUTSIDE. ALTHOUGH IN SOLITARY, HE COULD SOMETIMES SEE OTHER PRISONERS--ALL VIETNAMESE--WORKING IN DETAILS OUTSIDE. ONE SUCH DETAIL CONTAINED 99 MEN, ALL RELATIVELY YOUNG LOOKING, SOMETIMES WHEN A GUARD WAS NOT LOOKING, VARIOUS PRISONERS WOULD GREET HIM WITH "GOOD MORNING" IN ENGLISH AND HE BELIEVED FROM THIS AND ACCENTS THAT AT LEAST A NUMBER OF THEM WERE FROM

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THE SOUTH.

5. ON JULY 10 1976, GAY ESCAPED FROM THE CAMP. THIS PROBABLY REPRESENTS THE STORY OF THE ESCAPE OF AN AMERICAN PILOT REPORTED REF C. HE WALKED AT NIGHT IN A SOUTHWESTERN DIRECTION FOR 26 DAYS. WEARING HO CHI MINH SANDALS, WEAK, AND HAVING A FOOT INFECTION, HE GAVE UP HIS IDEA OF WALKING INTO LAOS AND TURNED HIMSELF IN AT A MUONG VILLAGE THIRTY

MILES FROM THE CAMP ON AUGUST 5. GAY WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE DISCIPLINE AND ORDERLINESS OF THESE MINORITY PEOPLE IN HANDLING HIM ONCE HE SURRENDERED TO THEM. RETURNED TO THE CAMP THE FOLLOWING DAY TO FACE AN ANGRY CAMP CHIEF, GAY WAS INTERROGATED FOR TEN DAYS (THE "GOOD GUY, BAD GUY" METHOD) AND THEN REMAINED IN HIS CELL, NOW SPORTING A DOUBLE LOCK, UNTIL SEPTEMBER 6 WHEN HE WAS FLOWN IN A PROP JET TO SAIGON. ESCORTED BY AN NVA CAPTAIN WHO HAD HAD EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE WITH AMERICAN POWS IN THE PAST, HE STAYED IN A JAIL AT GOI AP NEAR TAN SON NHUT UNTIL HE WAS TAKEN TO A HOTEL EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 20 REMAINING UNDER GUARD UNTIL HE WAS PLACED ON BOARD AIRCRAFT. HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER WERE INFORMED TO BE AT IMMIGRATION OFFICE 4:00 P.M. SAME DAY, WHERE THEY LEARNED THEY WERE TO DEPART (EXIT VISA DATED PREVIOUS DAY, ONLY), AND ALL SPENT THE NIGHT TOGETHER.

6. GAY KNEW OF NO OTHER AMERICAN OR OTHER NON-VIETNAMESE PRISONERS, INCLUDING TUCKER GOUGELMANN AND THE KOREAN DIPLOMATS. ALTHOUGH HE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT HE WAS THE LAST AMERICAN PRISONER, HE HAS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THERE MAY BE OTHERS, DUE TO A SLIP OF THE TONGUE OF HIS NORTH VIETNAMESE ESCORT.

7. GAY HAS HAD QUITE AN EXPERIENCE BUT IS IN GOOD PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH. WE WILL TALK FURTHER WITH HIM IN COMING DAYS AND REPORT AS APPROPRIATE. NO NEWSMEN WERE AT AIRPORT. BECAUSE OF GAY'S FAMILY REMAINING IN SAIGON, GAY REQUEST NO PUBLICITY ABOUT THEIR DEPARTURE. WE DOUBT THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO KEEP THEIR ANONYMITY VERY LONG. GAY HAS AGREED THAT WE SHOULD REPLY TRUTHFULLY IF ANY JOURNALIST ASKS WHETHER HE AND FAMILY HAVE DEPARTED SAIGON, WHICH WE HAVE ALREADY DONE IN CONFIDENTIAL

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RESPONSE TO QUERY FROM GEORGE MCARTHUR OF LOS ANGELES TIMES.  
BURKE

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